

FELLOWSHIP BOOKS

Edited by Mary Stratton

SPRINGTIME

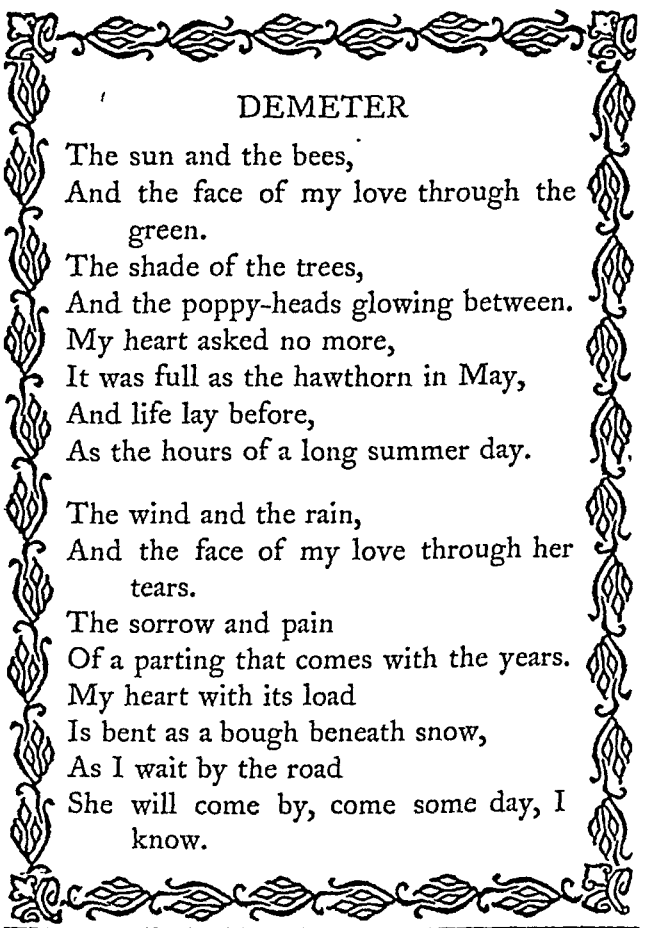
SPRINGTIME.

By
C. J. Tait

821
T 139 S



Published by B. T. Batsford, London.



DEMETER

The sun and the bees,
And the face of my love through the
green.

The shade of the trees,
And the poppy-heads glowing between.
My heart asked no more,
It was full as the hawthorn in May,
And life lay before,
As the hours of a long summer day.

The wind and the rain,
And the face of my love through her
tears.

The sorrow and pain
Of a parting that comes with the years.
My heart with its load
Is bent as a bough beneath snow,
As I wait by the road
She will come by, come some day, I
know.

THERE is a marble statue of Demeter, which shows the goddess gazing patiently into the distances of time and space. The *motif* of this expression has been sought for in the suggestion that it portrays the longing Mother waiting in patience, but also in hope, for the return of her daughter, Persephone. Such a radiance there is in the Mother's face that you can imagine the sorrows of separation were at the moment drifting away, and her child were indeed in sight. "I have waited for you, longed for you, and you have come."

☞ It is with a like hope, and our hearts at least filled with a like radiance, that many of us await the coming of Persephone—the Spring Child. Springtime has been too exclusively dedicated to the young. It is rather the season of the middle-aged. Youth and spring have too much in common to need each other. The young, when the

changes of the year affect them at all, seek their contrast in the failing lights of autumn, and silences broken only by the tinkle of the falling leaf. The claim of the lover, so often urged, is even weaker. The universe and all time are for him. Spring is indeed a renaissance rather than a birth. Its joys are the joys of reunion, and each return, while our hearts are still responsive, makes her dearer to us. We live again, and with an opulence to which age may contribute ; with an extravagance if you will, that shames the care which nips life and the niggard control we are wont to encourage. I had almost said that she purges us of our morals.

Æ Spring is virtually the commencement of the new year, despite the claims of the almanac. Upon the first of January we are in mid-winter. Moreover, upon that date we are still commemorating Christmas, and amongst those who treat Christmas handsomely, the last guest has not left, the final toast has not been drunk. The new-comer

is deposited upon our doorstep like an abandoned infant, with no apparent belongings, naked, shivering. It is surely meet that the new year should make a more decorous entry, clothed with new hopes and new desires, carried in Nature's gentle arms, and nursed in a lap bestrewn with flowers.

☞ No dweller in towns can fully estimate the magnitude of the change which spring heralds. I am not referring to agricultural matters. It is obvious that properly regulated seasons, or the reverse, are economically of overwhelming importance, and form the staple interest in rural districts. But to the mere dweller upon the country-side, who has no loss or gain hanging upon the rise or fall of the mercury, the gladness and movement in all that surrounds him are a blessed exchange from the silence and apathy that have brooded over sodden fields and flooded ways. There are periods when you may smell the water, as sailors aver they can smell icebergs. I do not mean water stagnating. It is rush-

ing water, water in bulk, pouring from the fields into the lanes, and levelling the green margins of the high-roads. Like a strike in a busy dockyard, conditions of weather may transform or hold up the country for weeks together. A prolonged frost kills off your feathered friends in their thousands, while the young lambs for whose welfare you have been so solicitous, succumb to the rains.

Æ But with March comes a change. The winds dry and cleanse. The chaffinch begins his welcome little note, a return thanks for the crumbs he has daily asked for at the kitchen door. Before the end of the month the chiff-chaff will be announcing, from the topmost branches, the return of the winged chorus from their foreign tour. And then, more often than not, we get those brilliant days that look so like, yet feel so much unlike, summer. Upon one side of a valley you may lie with the grass-snakes toasting in the sun, while on the other you must keep moving that you may keep warm. Spring

following spring have I been up such a valley. A stream rushes down from the moors between high cliffs clothed in oak scrub. Bays of meadow or woodland lie between them, the meadows dotted with golden gorse patches, the woodlands carpeted with daffodils. I do not think you again get colour effects so emphatic, so clearly defined. The atmosphere is luminous with an east wind and a clear sky, tempered by the moisture drawn from the rain-charged soil. Beneath the deep blue, ranges the deep brown of the hills. The woods have that blush transfused among their branches that buds bestow, lit up by the feathery verdancy of the larch. Beneath lie the quiet tones of autumn leaves, mingled with the grey and lemon of the daffodil. In six weeks the foliage will be luxuriant, and vistas will be blue with bluebells. The valley is beautiful then, also. But there is a pleasure in being poor, if not too poor, at least so Bridget Elia would have us believe, and Nature is lavish. And there is music for the

ear as well as colour for the eye. Many, whose acquaintance with the country is limited to their August holiday, cannot realize the pervading evidence of bird-life that fills the valleys at this time of the year. After the silence, and the buried life of the winter, I am not sure that the birds are not more welcome than the flowers. Wherever there is cover, the air is alive with their motions. The willow-wren is ever over our heads where there is foliage in which to hide, and carries on his subdued gossip. The several families of tits are practising their penetrating notes, and the green woodpecker, with his gorgeous plumage, laughs gaily as he sails away.

Æ Probably no subsequent experience approaches the impression produced by the first recollected meeting with springtime. The reality of certain flowers, scents, sounds, consists in the impressions then received. I think of a vale in the midst of Salisbury Plain, green with water-meadows bordering a stream. Chalk downs, covered with soft

turf, descend to the valley with outward and inward curve, here swept by the winds, there sheltered and still. Protected by a hill-side, bolder than the ordinary, a village lies amid the elm-trees. A grey church of more than usual dignity, cross-shaped, with a tower in its midst, stands on the edge of it. Like the church, the village runs cross-wise; a main street with a cluster of cottages right and left of it, and a large plane-tree like a boss in the centre; such is the plan.

☞ On one side lie the river and the water meadows, yellow with buttercups, on the other the rolling downs, while away, the distance is blue, as the valley opens out towards the level country. A few modest residences, some old almshouses where the almoners, draped in blue cloaks, wear a red cross upon their breasts, the remainder cottages—these form the street, which becomes a high-road when it reaches a lichen-covered park wall, shaded by elm-trees where the rooks build. Across a field stands the mill. Here the waters of

the leat tumble through the sluices and rush along their narrow way, making a commotion at once alluring and terrific, memory's one fearful note. The air off the downs is laden with the scent of cowslips, and the children are busy threading them into yellow balls. Wallflowers and polyanthus fill the little gardens, primulas in red pots glance out of the leaded window-panes. Such pictures they are that

*. . . flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude.*

☞ This is the fare for eye and ear that is country-bred. But what of the Londoner? Seasons cannot bring so sharp a contrast to him. No life surrounding him has been laid to sleep, and he awaits no awakening kiss. The streets he lives in are as busy under the gas lamps, as beneath sunshine. The shop windows may even claim to be more attractive. To see them at their best is to see them with half an eye, as part only of the street,

while refusing all their offers to do business with you. Otherwise you will realize too late that you have acquired something that will impose new conditions and perhaps demand a complete rearrangement of your environment and settled habits. Even should you quit the shop empty-handed, it is often with a feeling of abasement that you have betrayed the secret of some cherished want to most unworthy ears. Yet to have a hobby is wise. If it be a humble one, the more is it blessed. No rise or fall of market value can dispute its worth.

☞ Winter is dedicated to interiors, and of these there is no lack to the townsman. When without all is vile, within there are pictures, and pageants. No one is condemned to exist chiefly upon his intellectual capital, while those who are not capitalists may find occupations suited to their station. If in such case the visit of spring is not heralded with the country pomps, and slips almost unawares into the life of busy work or

play, it brings its special privileges and enjoyments. The pavements which are the Londoner's joy, are trod more lightly now that they are clean.

Æ The whole topography of the city seems altered. A street which apparently led nowhere but into fog, commands a distance of interest. The squares—always so distinctive a feature—are splendid, with their wealth of lilac, flag, and plane-tree. These are unique. But it is in sheer bricks and mortar that the Londoner may take his chief pride. Dirt and smoke have a long tale of grievances to answer, but let us be fair. When the atmosphere is clear, and the light strong, as it is many an April morning, then dirt and smoke impart a bloom to old brickwork that puts many a squalid street into the front rank of a city's attractions. Many a building, too, ordinarily presenting but little interest, suddenly shows itself possessed of a beauty of detail that amazes us. The fine contour of some Georgian moulding is disclosed, or the

sharp contrast of light and shade creates an architectural effect of a high order. Such are the gifts of an east wind, modified by what meteorologists term anticyclonic conditions. Truly it is an ill wind that blows nobody good.

II

☞ THERE is a *genius* of seasons as there is a *genius* of places. Wordsworth was sensitive to the latter amid the mountains of the Lakes, Samuel Johnson found it in Fleet Street, Turner again felt it in Venice, and Whistler upon the Embankment. It is the genius of Springtime that unlocks the heart, and kindles a lamp that illumines the less frequented regions within it. Such a light is reflected from many of the pages of Keble's "Christian Year."

*Lessons sweet of spring returning
Welcome to the thoughtful heart !
May I call ye sense or learning,
Instinct pure or heaven-taught art ?*

*Be your title what it may,
Sweet the lengthening April day,
While with you the soul is free,
Ranging wild o'er hill and lea.*

☞ Wordsworth has probably lived more intimately with Nature than any one else whom we know of. He possessed in a remarkable degree that power of detachment which gave Nature opportunity completely to occupy his soul. It was not immediately her beauty which appealed to him. He was not the lover claiming the surrender of his mistress. It was indeed the other way, the abandonment of surrender was his :

*The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion ; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms were then to me
An appetite.*

☞ What is best in his poetry is an acknowledgment of this passion either directly or

☞ indirectly,

indirectly, raising it at times, especially when the personal element did not wholly claim him, to the very height of lyrical beauty.

*The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her ; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place,
Where Rivulets dance their wayward round
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.*

☞ But such a union would have been imperfect had the human heart, with its capacity for admiration, hope and love, brought nothing to the compact but a sense of passionate devotion. There were times when "the sounding cataract" was but as an echo, and the poet heard instead

*The still sad music of humanity,
Not harsh or grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.*

☞ And when his "wild ecstasies" were "matured into a sober pleasure" he claims

*A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.*

Æ If this sense of the infinite, of the sublimity and ends of life, as well as its beginnings, is not revealed to all through Nature, yet for all of us at least

*She can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.*

æ Nature to Wordsworth was a passion in which the sensuous and mysterious were blended. Many poets have voiced one or the other. Keats pre-eminently responded to the first of these, and his note of melancholy must be accepted as one of the many tones of the true lover. But Robert Herrick might securely claim the first place in her favour. By none has Nature been treated more tenderly, while coupled with this tenderness, there is the touch of gallantry, gay yet deferential, that makes his poetry unique in its charm.

*Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon ;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attain'd his noon.*

*Stay, stay
Until the hasting day
Has run*

*But to the evensong ;
And, having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along.*

Æ This is in the strain of the Elizabethan lover to his mistress.

Æ What winning tribute to the country life is paid in "A Thanksgiving to God."

*Lord, Thou hast given me a cell
Wherein to dwell.*

*A little house, whose humble roof
Is weather-proof.*

*A little buttery and therein
A little bin,*

*Which keeps my little loaf of bread
Unchipt, unfleat.*

Æ And in this manner he pours forth his thanksgiving, as a grace before meat, for the simple yet adequate gifts of life. No poets have lived with Nature on a more secure footing, or with such contentment as Wordsworth and Herrick. Yet with what a difference in their bearing. The one retired in habit, adopting an attitude almost of severity, to accord with the conditions that such a life imposed. The other gracious and accessible,

singing of "Maypoles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes," with all the relish of enjoyment. Yet "Primroses filled with morning dew," those "whimp'ring younglings," tell him "that things of greatest, so of meanest worth, conceived with grief are and with tears brought forth." Classic as his setting often is, giving at such times the touch of Arcadian simplicity, no poet of his time wore the disguise more thinly. He wrote as securely as Wordsworth wrote. "I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject," observes Wordsworth, and Herrick was no less sincere.

When green the corn,
And tiny birds take wing,
When white the thorn,
And fairy blue-bells ring,
Then babes are born
All wide-eyed, wondering.

When days are long
And earth her fullness yields,
When youth with strong
Lithe arm the sickle wields,
The reaper's song
Sounds over yellow fields.

When winter-time
Is come, and parting nigh,
When sunbeams hide,
And song is turned to sigh,
Ah I love abide,—
Though spring and summer die.

III

☞ SPRING steps so easily into Summer. You might expect a child's progression towards manhood to be equally smooth, but it is not. He advances like the pieces on a chessboard—zigzag or obliquely. He is truly the Father of the man—they are separate identities.

☞ Charles Lamb felt something of this towards his own child life, and takes leave “to cherish the remembrance of that young master—with as little reference, I protest, to his stupid changeling of five-and-forty, as if it had been a child of some other house, and not of my parents. God help thee, Elia, how thou art changed !” “The unplumbed salt estranging sea” surrounds the child equally with the rest of us. His world is not our world. “Trailing clouds of glory” he comes, and his estimate of material things is gauged by their readiness to resolve themselves into the facts of this unseen world of his.

☞ The sorry part of it is that all our efforts

at what we call education are so well meant. The mercy is that we do so little harm. So long as the means of earning a living are protected by tests in certain kinds of knowledge, parents must feel they are only doing their duty towards their offspring in endeavouring to qualify them for these tests. Indeed, what we call education is a sort of infant insurance, craven in inception, and, more often than not, futile in achievement. "The vague and imagining child has by some process been turned, or has turned himself into the intellectually dull, apathetic, indolent, professional schoolboy," observes Sir Oliver Lodge. Judged by such tests, the majority of boys start upon the real business of life possessed of an early acquaintance with failure, and a spirit thus bred is not one that conquers new worlds.

☞ The child is born with all the instincts necessary for constructing an environment of his own. He possesses the resource and the daring of the pioneer. That his imagination
21
☞ should

should be active is not surprising. If life at the first glance is not wonderful, it is at least novel. But it is the speed and invention with which he gives shape to his imaginings that distinguish him. He achieves without effort what the politician, the artist, the financier, the inventor, the man of commerce, strive to do, and fail to do.

☞ People who claim to understand children, are rarely reliable. They really mean that they have formed theories about them. Bachelors, as a class, are perhaps the most successful; they have the daring to offer what either physically or morally has been declared indigestible, and their opportunities for theorizing also have been small.

☞ It has been said that the child stories in the Old Testament show a greater insight into child life than can be found elsewhere. The child there, indeed, plays a great part in the drama of life. Love and obedience are treated with exquisite tenderness. But the recognition of the legitimate and inde-

pendent claims of childhood is something quite modern. It came with the recognition of so many other hitherto neglected claims during the period signalized by the French Revolution, and it is to the poets of that period that one may look for its expression. Blake was the first to realize it. Perhaps, too, the waywardness of Blake's verse strikes an effective note of sympathy. The theme of "Songs of Innocence" is Joy. It declares Joy to be the natural inheritance of the child.

*"When the voices of children are heard on the
green
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast
And everything else is still."*

It is the nurse who sings, and calls the children to their beds. But the children, of course, do not want to go to bed, and reply

*"No, no, let us play, for it is yet day
And we cannot go to sleep :
Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,
And the hills are all covered with sheep."*

And the nurse, being an uncommon nurse,
answers

*"Well, well, go and play till the light fades away,
And then go home to bed."*

And so,

*The little ones leaped and shouted and laughed,
And all the hills echoèd.*

A babe to Blake is Joy personified.

*"I have no name,
I am but two days old."
What shall I call thee ?*

*"I happy am,
Joy is my name."
Sweet joy befall thee.*

But the capacity for joy carries with it an equal capacity for woe ; a sense of woe deepened by a child's helplessness. This

affected Blake no less strongly than joy's natural claim.

*My Mother groaned, my Father wept,
Into the dangerous world I leapt ;
Helpless, naked, piping loud,
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.*

Here there is something of the omen of the Greek Chorus about the child's very entry upon the scene. And the woe often expressed is the more penetrating, since the circumstances are but vaguely defined.

*" Father, Father, where are you going ?
Oh, do not walk so fast !
Speak, Father, speak to your little boy,
Or else I shall be lost."*

*The night was dark, no father was there,
The child was wet with dew.
The mire was deep, and the child did weep,
And away the vapour flew.*

There was a later poet whose instinct for verse was genuine and whose sympathies responded

responded to 'the distress made prevalent by the Corn Laws, distress which pitifully touched the children, and even the child worker. This was Ebenezer Elliott of the "Corn Law Rhymes," published in 1831. The verse I give might belong to a later phase of "Songs of Experience."

*Child, what hast thou with sleep to do ?
Awake, and dry thine eyes ;
Thy tiny hands must labour too ;
Our bread is taxed, arise !
Arise and toil long hours twice seven,
For pennies two and three :
Thy woes make angels weep in Heaven,
But England still is free.*

☞ Wordsworth's child is less abstract. He or she, as it may be, is a portrait, and possesses a personality. The little maid in "We are Seven," the boy hooting to the owls on Winander Lake, the figure of himself "tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds . . . more ragged than need was,"

are all real children. "The little maid" dwells in her own world, and stubbornly contests the facts of it. For the most part they are solitary children, happy in their solitude—possessed by the realities of their imagination.

*There was a boy : ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander ! Many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake ;
And there with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him.—And they would
shout*

*Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled ; concourse wild
Of mirth and jocund din ! And when it chanced*

*That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents ; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.*

IV

Æ OUR divisions of time are too mathematical to serve as a convenient measure. The almanac, finding this to be so, has for its own purposes taken great liberties with the months. For us, days may be long, or days may be short, and we celebrate the longest and the shortest of them. A day is more truly presented to creatures of our habits and arrangements as consisting of morning, noon and evening, and nothing makes us more sensible of these divisions than do the changes of season.

☞ The morning holds good throughout the year. But the lengthening of the noon-tide, the after-noon as we call it, is the gift of spring, as the evening is of summer. Before February has closed we realize our new opportunities. A day of generous, if not of full, measure is before us, and as we look upon it from the hill-top, like the schoolboy possessed with a sense of riches with a few pence in his pocket, we are elated by the knowledge of the increased minutes' grace which daylight will bestow. Clouds hurry along, passing raindrops fall, but the gift of liberty is the one lively sense within us. We have broken the spell of the fireside, and the keen enjoyment provoked by physical activity pervades our whole being. Hemmed in by the humdrums of daily life we sometimes feel that liberty is perhaps the least of our possessions.

☞ Liberty is the realization of our natural desire for expansion. We have, however, probably as little knowledge of true liberty

as we have of righteousness. "If ye continue in My word . . . ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," is a saying as difficult to us as "In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof is no death." It stands as often as not as the mere negative of duties to be performed. Or it is a lure—a condition under which our desire for expansion persuades itself it can breathe more fully, under which we can be more truly ourselves.

☞ Our limitations are possibly our dearest possessions. Let us beware of ignoring them, of too greedily satisfying our apparent wants. It is useful to have a want. It is like a bone to a dog; we can sharpen our desires on it. Our limitations make life a simpler affair if we will only accept them, as a designer accepts the limits of the space he has to fill, since they mould his pattern. To do the duty nearest to hand is a good antidote to libertinism, for much of the craving for liberty should be better known

by that name. Contentment is a watch-dog that keeps off many a thief who would rob us of our peace.

☞ The truth we seek has been said to lie upon the circumference of a circle of which we are the centre. Any one line from our centre will touch it, and the multiplication of lines that all fall short, help us not a jot. As we skip from one to the other, we are like a squirrel in a revolving cage ; race round as he will, he gets no further.

☞ As soon as liberty begins to discuss its rights, it commences to forge its own chains, and when the lawyer comes in at the door, liberty flies out of the window. The ideally free man is the outlaw, not as defying the law, but as outside the law, the law both civil and moral. He is a law unto himself, but he is free only so long as his knowledge of law is sound and his judgment just. What one man claims as his right, is more often than not another man's wrong. Live and

let live is the maxim to go through life with, yet those who are most jealous of their liberty are very often the last to respect its claim on others. The sense of freedom encourages and confirms the realization of the possession of individual personality, and this preservation of our personality as an operative force is of moment, not only to ourselves individually, but to the world perhaps, at any rate to the small part of the world which we may call ours. This claim must not be confused with the statement that our first duty is to ourselves, or, as one has heard it put, if we do not look after ourselves no one else will look after us, which means the annihilation of our real self. Personality is not egotism, although it is a force which, when directed inwards and not outwards, becomes the driving power of the egotist. This is why the egotist is so often a very interesting person. His personality is more potent than the average, and after the selfish part of him has taken

all the power it needs, there may still be enough residuum to kindle others.

☞ Personality may be said to be the communicable part of us. The gift of expressing it, or transferring it, is the possession only of some. It may be enough for a person only to enter a room, for all who are there to realize that their environment has in some mysterious way become altered. This power of transference is doubtless limited. Some may respond while others do not. Between men and women, stimulated by the influence of sex, a limited power is doubtless of constant occurrence. But in the most active instances no stimulus is required. This human property is constantly threatened by convention, by the tacit social agreements that are laid down and accepted more or less by each one of us, or by unreasonable preoccupation. Nature may in such predicament become our best friend. She cares nothing for convention, or for consistency, which is but another word for the same thing. There

are certain tiresome persons who are always professing to recognize family likenesses. They belong to that similar class that sees nothing in Nature beyond scientific classifications. Happily there is much else, and the hedges along the country lane are as diversified as the crowded pavement of a street. There is an ominous saying that a child "wants his angles knocked off," from which it may be inferred that the time has arrived when he must forthwith specialize, and submit to be "finished" in the school of social convention.

We feel no foot-hold in the ages past,
No beacon lights the still, dim years ahead,
What will be is not, what has been is dead,
Save for the wreckage on life's breakers cast.
"Find truth," we cry, "that we may hold it fast,
For faith is famished, and dear hope is fled";
Yet, 'neath the beating of Time's wings outspread,
The present lies like space—limitless—vast.
'Tis those who feel the Spirit of the Hour
Steal through their souls, revealing purpose sure
And love supreme, as when a sudden shower
Pierces the thirsty ground, and fountains pure
Well forth, know that our heritage, our human
dower,
Is simple trust and love, and these endure.

THE EASTER-TIME brings with it suggestions of a new life, a life beyond our limited experience and comprehension. It has been so from all ages. It was confirmed by the Founder of Christianity, while His overwhelming personality stamped it with an individual appeal that has dominated human outlook and aspiration wherever civilization has been young enough, and simple enough, to embrace it. In the many examples of failure which meet us, people often, sensible enough in most things, blame the new wine and not the old bottles. It accompanies a sense of life when that sense is at its fullest, and the development of that sense lies along the path of righteousness. If we fail to realize this, it is possibly because, as Matthew Arnold said, "our experience of righteousness is really so small."

Some little weight should still be attached to this old Hebrew insistence on morality, especially since our physical recreations and demands are to-day receiving their full meed

of respect. Nor should our ears be stopped to a note of warning uttered by Huxley twenty years ago, when he declared that physical laws and spiritual laws were, as far as he could see, directly opposed to each other. Whenever we come in contact with a seer, and he may always be found among poets of the first order, we recognize his power of widening the limits, and simplifying our comprehension, of this sense of life. But seers are few and far between, and although the essence of their greatness is their grasp of truths that are immutable, yet they are essentially the product of an age, and their voices do not always carry over the débris that civilization has meanwhile been casting up.

☞ We have abandoned the Miltonic style in our conception of the Universe. Our Earth is no longer the centre of it. Our system possesses its own laws, but these are subordinate to the laws of greater systems, of which we know nothing beyond the evidence that such systems exist. Our earth, the sun and

its planets are a fragment, a part of a whole, and presumably man is a fragment also, with his multifarious desires and schemes and aspirations. Yet I think more has been discovered about life than about the universe. But the experiences are individual, and are communicable only under restricted conditions. The conditions to which an apprehension is favourable are not permanent, and likewise demand similar conditions for their acceptance. Truths of such a nature cannot be distributed as logical truths may. Hence they cannot become a national possession and create an epoch. Spiritual revivals there have been, such as are connected with the names of Savonarola, Martin Luther and John Wesley, but these were rather reactions occasioned by previous circumstances.

☞ Goodness is the heritage of the individual. The national and imperial idea is expansion, but the individual may respect his boundaries, his limitations, and if needful make them. Not by self-repression—that

has been tried—but by renunciation, which is another temper, and one in which the individual and the spirit meet upon friendly terms. ☞ One boundary there is for all—"from whose bourn no traveller returns." Death is the common lot of humanity, and it should be a privilege rather than a pain to accept it. Any alternative is too unnatural to conceive of. The calamity is that, despite the æons of human experience, it comes to those near and dear who remain, as a shock that is sometimes overwhelming. Nature is greatly responsible for this. The refusal to yield, which may be uttered by our physical forces, and the warfare that ensues, is a spectacle that is pitiful to Nature's children. It may, too, be painful to the fighter, outmatched and foredoomed as the slave in a gladiatorial combat. A kind of wild courage, as wild as Nature herself, may meet such events, a spirit that laughs at the worst that can be inflicted. Not the laugh of the scornful, but the laughter of conscious,

or at least semi-conscious victory. When Nature thus presents herself in her ugliness, in her crudeness, we know we are her masters, somehow—somewhere in the long run. A devotion which has been the great fact of our lives cannot be broken in such fashion, and we refuse to acknowledge defeat. Such an attitude may carry us through a crisis, but there are the silences of life to be faced, when no battle-cry can be heard, when we are like children only fit to be cared for by a Father.

☞ But if righteousness be the law of our being ; the condition under which a natural development only can conduct itself, it meets no further a demand than do conditions of soil and climate in the instance of plant life. "What the sun is to the flower, Jesus Christ is to my soul," said Tennyson. Possibly all that Tennyson meant to convey when he said this, cannot be known to a third person. But to any one conversant with the habitual attitude of his mind, it comprehended the

sense of a dominating personal relationship, in the bosom of which lay hidden the secret of life and death. Human personality was his sheet anchor—the rock upon which he raised “In Memoriam,” and in Jesus he found the fullest expression of this quality. “There is something that watches over us, and our individuality endures: that is my faith and that’s all my faith,” and in this faith he was strong—stronger than many. Yet even when weak in our assurance as regards our own destiny, we are confident in our assurance regarding the destiny of those we love. And this is along the nature of things. “I am what I am in relation to others. Relationships founded on a sense of lasting affection are the sole realities of life.”

☞ A great deal of our concern about a future life, as it is commonly called, and our failure to come to grips with it, is due to our habit of relegating a full sense of life to the future tense. That our limitations are well-nigh insurmountable may be admitted,

but there is no evidence that they are absolutely insurmountable ; indeed all evidence points the other way. Life is an entity which has hitherto at least evaded all efforts to break it up into component atoms. It belongs to the present, of which the past is already an established part. The future is unborn and is but a promise of the present, at the moment a void that the present is silently and irresistibly occupying.

VI

THE mere fact of change, change judiciously prescribed, is not only salutary but necessary to our human economy. In a child, the demand for change is continuous, since his lack of an organized reserve of force causes him to tire quickly. As we grow older the demand is not so insistent, and if it be, it is generally compelled to submit to circumstance and conditions. The amount of change that is good for us, that we can take with impunity, or must

swallow against our inclinations, depends upon individual temperament. Some of us are sensitive to the slightest variations. Charles Lamb, as he tell us, was so. "Naturally, beforehand, shy of novelties: new books, new faces, new years—from some mental twist which makes it difficult in me to face the prospective." "And to make me more alone, our ill-tempered maid is gone, who with all her airs was yet a home piece of furniture, a record of better days." Such natures live in the past more readily than they do even in the present, let alone the future. Change shifts their centres of gravity, and begets an eccentric motion in their wheel of life, that threatens to discharge them into space, upon some parabolic course that knows no return to the true facts of existence. And change to many has been change for the worse and these are tempted to rather bear those ills they have than fly to others that they know not of. They may follow each other in a bewildering succession,

until our sense of what is stable and permanent becomes demoralized. We may even lose touch with that which is more essential than all else to us, our true self. Our life, the experiences that have come to us, the events that have graven their ineradicable signs upon our character, are among the foremost and essential realities of being. When we are bidden to honour our Father and our Mother, there is something more enjoined upon us than filial duty, or even personal affection. They are the elements from which we have sprung. They stand for our beginning, and their care and guidance through childhood are the moulding and sustaining forces of our being. And all experiences that have lent their aid in a lesser, or even maybe greater, degree make a demand upon us for reverence. If we give up this reverence for the memories we have cherished, a part of our personality dies. And death may have become so common a thing, giving up, so accepted a condition as we go on

through life, that we make little fight to retain these personal heirlooms. We may even yield them at the demand of those silent footpads of life, those chilling influences that steal upon us when we are weary or foolish. And so we gradually become cynics and unbelievers, in short, thoroughly stupid and unhappy people. The worst of it is, that such humours belong for the most part to later life, when our ant-like instincts of repair and building up are enfeebled. To allow these memories to become weakened and detached, is to allow our sense of reality to become weakened also. Memory may become to us but a perfume, as I heard it described by one who had lived his life, and frankly accepted new conditions. This is Autumn indeed, the scent of the dead leaf; the golden tints of reflected sunshine are the last gifts Nature has to bestow. But a little while, and Winter is upon us.

☞ Is there not a sort of grossness, a body, about the most impalpable part of us?

Science will not allow us to dispense with matter. Its forms may be infinitely attenuated, but it is matter all the same. Even a soul may some day be weighed. It should at least smack of the soil upon which it is raised, like an old wine. And so one is tempted to class with the unrealities of life, those philosophies and theosophies that refine our true and hardy selves into a state of non-existence, under which condition, it is urged, our real self only can be attained. Alice in Wonderland, when startled by the discovery that she was shrinking, nibbled the other side of her cake. When we are apprehensive of a like change, let us take our Shakespeare from the shelf, and feel ourselves within his unyielding grasp of all that is real. There is nothing about his men and women that is unsubstantial. He was alive enough to all that is so delicate as to be inexpressible, but all that was beyond his grasp he gravely touches, sublimely hints at, and passes on.

☞ I have said that change human nature will have, and if it cannot get it in one way it will get it in another. With the increasing opportunities for change, an increase which is eminently characteristic of the present time, the advantages offered by established opportunities are likely to be overlooked and indeed regarded as no change at all. The limitations imposed by the seasons, once as marked as its benefits, are removed by improvements in our material conditions. Extremes of conditions, like extremes of opinions, tend towards a rounding off, an increasing uniformity of existence, comparable to salt that has lost its savour. Humanity, where either bored or overtaxed, has, from time to time, cried aloud for a return to Nature. It is more a cry of despair, of a child for its Mother, than the adequate expression of any clearly felt want. There is no return for the human race upon its own tracks. Poor suffering humanity would not be where it is now were this door

opened to it. But a return to that consideration which is due to our deeper instincts, and to the lessons we have laboriously and painfully learned, is not only often desirable but absolutely necessary, if these instincts are to survive as a part of ourselves, or the lessons are not to be entirely forgotten. How often the claims of affection are but half regarded ; affection which we really possess and which we fiercely claim when imperilled by some danger, the suddenness of which arouses us like the flick of a whip. The *mise-en-scène* of true-love is not invariably that of the tragic drama. If we would avoid the tragedy, perhaps we had better not seek too assiduously the whirlwind of passion, but let us be more than equally shy of falling into the doldrums. Love is sometimes none the worse for a little scientific attention. We instinctively shun the suggestion of a deliberate administration of stimulants to so tender a patient, since the purest of water from the deepest of wells is its natural drink.

But the physician may order otherwise. And in like manner, we want to have a care for those impulses, and Nature, the Mother of those impulses, which refresh or restore our sense of touch with the elemental world. One need not analyse the emotions such an experience brings. They differ just as do the temperaments of those who encounter it. But all doubtless are conscious of a loosening of the bonds that routine has woven. Our power of detachment is strengthened, a power that is invaluable, and one that may be cultivated to operate even amid the whirl of mundane circumstances.

☞ “Man is greater than his circumstances” if he can but discover it, and often it is the opportunity only which is needed. The optimist is born and not made. There are those who are quick and expert enough never to give an oncoming wave the chance to hit them fair and square. They dive through it, and appear on the other side a little breathless, perhaps, but not very materially the

75-7-1515
worse. Such expert swimmers beget the spirit of adventure in others. They are conscious of, and diffuse, the sense of exhilaration that attends success. The other type is not so adroit. He receives a blow that knocks the senses out of him, but he regards it as an accident, or at least an incident only. Success is not so apparent, yet he claims it as none the less sure in the long run. Such a spirit is born of a subliminal sense, that assures him that the whole trend of things is forward and not backward. It is possible, by closing one's eyes in a railway carriage, to produce a feeling of uncertainty as to the direction in which we are travelling, and some people go through the world with their eyes shut. But passing objects carry conviction to the traveller, and may do the same to the fearful and doubting. While the optimistic sense, therefore, is naturally temperamental, and based upon this subliminal assurance, the practical man may convince himself by those processes which are most

natural to him. But he must be really practical, and not one of those intrinsically shallow beings who impose their own estimate of themselves upon a too credulous world.

æ The man who, like Odysseus—"of many resources"—avoids calamity, or whose hide is impervious to "the whips and scorns of time"—finds life quite sufficiently pleasant. Yet those who have not this faculty of turning everything to profit, if they would look a little more closely into their affairs, would find their profit and loss account much more in their favour than they imagine. We are not half thankful enough for what we possess, and often because we but only half realize our possessions. A song of thanksgiving may sometimes be more helpful to us than a prayer for an increase of grace.

Oh ! thou who first, though since forgotten, sought
To fold the rock in magic web of line,
There lives no legacy so fair as thine,
Linking the ages with immortal thought ;
Or now in bronze or crystal marble fraught
With yielding curvature of creeping vine,
Its secret wooed by sunbeams, flashed from shrine
Of balanced mass, and carven form enwrought.

Yon palace towers, uplifted into space,
Gaze on the hurrying throng around its base,
And guard its gift of beauty from the strife ;
Ah ! not in vain has Nature shown her skill,
Art's aim is but to supplement her will,
And fire the sleeping form with hidden life.

“Sonnet de L'Architecture.” Armand Silvestre

VII

THE world has had her young days. I mean rather the days in which she has realized her youth, and enjoyed the strength and eager sense that accompany such a time. I do not think the world is old now, only, as so many young people do, she likes to pose as old. And as young people may do, she outgrows her strength and has to lie prone for a while. In other words, she has her seasons, when the seed at one time lies buried in the soil, at another, when it bursts forth ; when busy life seems everywhere, when her springtime has returned. As a form of speech we talk of the old world, but it becomes less and less applicable as we get to learn more and more of her history. We can look back perhaps seven thousand years with some assurance and find things going on in many respects as they do now. But we are upon more trodden ground if we confine ourselves to that period of time that lies between us and the people of Athens. And

if we do so, we find that the milestones are not so very numerous, those landmarks of definite development or progress, that have so largely made us and our environment.

Many of these epochs, including the older of them, repose under the patronage of an august name. Pericles, Justinian, Charlemagne are among them. This seems to add an individual interest, more apparent, perhaps, than real. But it is convenient. The rise of Athens under Pericles, at the close of the Persian wars, was an episode in regard to the magnificence of her enterprise, and the rapidity of her achievement, that has never been equalled. Greek enterprise, shorn of tribal faction, hurled itself upon civilization with an impetus that has influenced, if not controlled, all subsequent development, an impetus which time cannot stay. So swift was her development that, taking sculpture only, and the advance made in the few years between Myron and Pheidias, you seem to behold her gathering herself for the spring.

The note of tragic tension that arose from the theatre of Dionysos still vibrates, and the undulating swing of the chorus ripples across the ocean of time. The throng of youths and maidens, chariots and horsemen, that sweep around the Parthenon frieze, cannot rest. Aphrodite, though she be but a reflection of the original creation of Praxiteles, still haunts the sons of men by her beauty.

☞ But Greece was destined to conquer the world by her arms as well as by her arts. Alexander marched into the Old World, the really Old World, the world of the East, and Hellenized it. Alexandria and Ephesus were eclipsed by Rome, and she outlived them, but what the Romans learned of the arts, they learned from the Greeks. The great contribution of Rome to the world has been the foundations of Democracy. It set out to found a vast Empire. It did so, and by the excellence of its laws and institutions, freedom and independence became possible.

✠ I do not propose to write history, but to point to the continuity of that unfaltering onwardness that has never left the world. It has captured each successive wave of Empire and Kingdom that has burst upon it. Thus Greece and Rome, having spent themselves individually, take on a new lease of power in combination. The Empire of Byzantium is built up, leaving what was Roman to become Romanesque under the guidance of her northern conquerors. To this new Empire Justinian has lent his name, and left the superb monument of Santa Sophia as a memorial. The tide still flowing West and North, Romanesque and Byzantine stream into the new Kingdom of Charlemagne, the first Empire of the West and North, out of which medieval Europe sprang, and like foam upon the heaped-up meeting of these waters rose the great Cathedrals. Outside this centre of civilization was a force touching it here and touching it there, while too alien to become one with it, the power of Mohammedanism.

It threatened to overrun Europe, and in so far as the Crusades were a retaliatory movement, they have been called the "foreign policy" of the Popes. But Venice, Sicily, Spain, vividly reflect this influence, while it affected all medieval art, science and letters. These, then, were the elements that made the Renaissance, or the waking up of a young people to the enjoyment of their glorious inheritance. It came in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It reached its fullest glow in the fifteenth century. That its adornment should then have become classical, is due to the fact that it was Italy that set the palette. The magnificence of her art, the courage of her sciences, captured the world. If from her long roll of honour one were to take but a handful of names, they are such as might represent the genius adequately allotted to several centuries rather than to one.

☞ Michelangelo, Titian, Donatello, Galileo
and, by a little more generous extension,

Dante. They are among the immortals. The spirit of Michel still broods over Rome, Dante over Florence, Galileo over Pisa. The painter's eye glances from the City of Sunsets, while the little man on the big horse in the square at Padua still issues his commands to those who will hearken. Donato, Donatello, so pleasant and simple a person that we always know him by his diminutive, I never think of that great artist, still dominating the ideals of sculpture, without adding to his memory "and a little child shall lead them."

☞ When this tide of expansion reached England, as it did in the Elizabethan age, it was calculated to produce either no result at all, when opposed to phlegmatic Saxon temperament, or by overcoming this, to generate by its resistance an energy of an uncommon kind. The latter happened. In power and range of imaginative production, Shakespeare has probably eclipsed all other artists. His intellectual opulence

is in harmony with an age that reckoned in ship-loads its gems, its bars of silver and ingots of gold, culled from the Spanish main. No man is superfluous to him, "no, nor woman neither." He portrayed what he saw, and he saw everything, and nothing with the same eye. Universal as was his attitude toward life, yet was he the true son of the Renaissance. Life may bring pain, may bring sorrow, but never gloom. That in the artist, where not a weakness, as with Dante and Michelangelo, is a trick in chiaroscuro as with Salvator Rosa. ¶ The upheaval that came with the French Revolution brought again to the surface a romanticism that coloured the simpler outlook on life. England alone was in the position to make use of it. Across the Channel every one else was otherwise occupied. Rousseau's appeal for a return to Nature found there no true response until the Barbizon painters.

¶ Perhaps, however, I am following custom

too closely in supposing that the spirit of revolution had much to do with the revival of romance in this country, the work of William Blake excepted. Something of this spirit, however, had been displayed in Literature, by Dr. Johnson's notorious letter to Lord Chesterfield repudiating patronage. Poetry had for some time been exhibiting signs of surfeit from the profusion of classical conceits upon which it had been for long feeding, and Thomson, Crabbe, and Collins show evidence of the demand for a simpler fare. Crabbe even erred on the side of frugality. On a sudden, Chatterton, the wonderful boy, and the "Percy Reliques" spread the board with all the paraphernalia requisite for a banquet. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, appeared like a star cluster in the firmament. When Matthew Arnold seized upon Wordsworth as the exponent of his definition that Poetry was a criticism of Life, when he denounced Shelley for his lack of subject-matter, de-

clared that Byron's verse would outlive his contemporaries by reason of the force of his personality, disqualified Keats as immature, and abandoned Coleridge "wrecked in a mist of opium," his judgments, if not entirely happy, are a valuable contribution to the comparative merits of the group. Mercifully, it is critics alone who are asked to compare.

☞ Is the Age of Victoria too near us to speak of its contribution to Life? If less audacious than the Elizabethan age, it was more comprehensive. Its firing line was more extended, its sentries more nearly posted. Never before had poetry, art, and science together come forward so liberally to give their expression.

☞ And what of the future?

*Where lies the land to which the ship would
go?*

Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.

*And where the land she travels from? Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.*

☞ May we not answer these lines of
Clough's in the same buoyant spirit that
inspired the friend who wrote his elegy.

*That single elm-tree bright
Against the West, I miss it ! is it gone ?
We prized it dearly : while it stood, we said,
Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead ;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.*

*Quick ! let me fly and cross
Into yon farther field ! 'Tis done : and see,
Backed by the sunset, which doth glorify
The orange and pale violet evening sky,
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree ! the Tree !*



EURYDICE

Good-bye and Good-bye, is the spell time's
 repeating
As it sweeps to the past what but now was so
 nigh,
While a failing voice utters a wistful, entreating
Good-bye.
Shall we live in the past with a tear and a sigh,
Welcome visions of lost ones with sorrowful
 greeting
And loud call their loved names with passionate
 cry ;
Or cherish the present however so fleeting,
New hope in our hearts, though the old hopes
 may die,
Accepting the fortune that links with all meeting,
Good-bye ?

Printed at The Ballantyne Press
London 1913